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ABSTRACT

This publication outlines approaches librarians may take to begin a literacy program in a public library or a literacy coalition in the community, and provides guidelines for writing a successful literacy grant application to fund the coalition. Ways in which a library may advance literacy and serve patrons for whom English is a second language are also suggested. Some positive developments in the field of literacy are noted, including the adoption of workplace and family literacy programs, increased federal and state funding of literacy programs, public awareness of literacy issues, and television coverage of literacy programs. This guide includes a literacy coalition sample organization chart and an application checklist for Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) grant funds. (MAB)

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Occasional Paper

Reaching New Readers:

Library Planning for a Literate Society

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The State Library of Ohio

Series 2, No. 6, May 1990

Reaching New Readers:

Library Planning for a Literate Society

Written by: Thomas Szudy

Edited by: Jane Byrnes

FORWARD

The State Library of Ohio is pleased to offer *Reaching New Readers: Library Planning for a Literate Society* to the Ohio and American library communities. This publication is both a revision and an extension of the State Library's 1988 Occasional Paper *The Public Library and Literacy: A Community Based Approach*. It is a revision in that it incorporates the results of new Ohio success stories in the previously existing sections outlining how a public library may begin a literacy program or coalition. It is an extension because it offers new yet proven advice on how a library may handle the particular challenges offered by those for whom English is a second language and for whom literacy, in any language, represents an imposing hurdle.

As with the earlier work, the creation of *Reaching New Readers* involves a number of committed library staff. Above all it is necessary to recognize the Ohio librarians and other literacy supporters, a small but growing army which is accomplishing virtual miracles on a daily basis. In addition, this work clearly benefits from the commitment of its author, Thomas Szudy and the professionalism of its editor, Jane Byrnes.

All involved are to be commended for their tireless work to bring those who cannot read into the community of readers.

Richard M. Cheski
State Librarian of Ohio

Introduction

The State Library of Ohio published *The Public Library and Literacy: A Community Based Approach* in May 1988. The large response to this publication is indicative of a determination by librarians to initiate library literacy programs. The original Occasional Paper outlined three major approaches that librarians may take to begin their involvement in literacy:

Step 1. Establish Resource Centers for Literacy Materials
Step 2. Cooperate with an Existing Literacy Center
Step 3. Initiate a Library Based Literacy Center

The following six steps are usually taken by librarians to initiate a community program as outlined in the first paper:

A. Examine the community
B. Funding
C. Marshal the community
D. Select the program
E. Implement the program
F. Review and evaluate

Many librarians have begun using these steps to begin literacy activity in their community. Since the publication of that paper, the State Library of Ohio has been involved in additional projects which will further impact how librarians combat illiteracy. In many cases, the next level of involvement has become the development of local and regional literacy coalitions. These coalitions can be of a formal nature or informal depending upon the individual community.

One method that yields results in starting literacy programs is writing a grant application. Grant writing is a specialized skill which can, with a variety of potential sources of support, be utilized to seek funding for programs. The process of writing a grant helps to clarify thinking as to how a program will address a specific need in the community. It has value regardless of the decision on an application. Where outside funding is not available, this effort may even lead to a reallocation of existing resources.

Another important development that has influenced literacy programs concerns those with limited English speaking ability. Adult new readers share a common cause with people who are learning English as a second language. This Occasional Paper will undertake a review of these issues and look forward to the future.

On Your Mark:
A Brief Review of Starting a Literacy Program

Many librarians do not know at the onset how to begin a community literacy program. The first step requires an understanding of the need for addressing literacy in the community. This understanding of the local literacy problem will usually come from an examination of the community. The next step involves securing funding for the project. When funding is assured, the community is ready to be included in on the project. The service program is then selected from a menu of options presented by the community. The program is implemented by the chosen staff people and coordinated by the director. Finally, after the program has been in existence for a period of time, it is necessary to review and evaluate its progress.

Librarians are encouraged to use the following checklist as a guide to starting community literacy programs:

1. Contact the State Library for consultant information
2. Establish a literacy resource center in the library
3. Cooperate with an existing literacy center to share resources
4. Examine the community for literacy needs
5. Seek funding from private and public sources
6. Marshal the community to design the project
7. Select the program from the options presented
8. Implement the selected program
9. Review and evaluate the program
10. Seek additional funding if needed

Coming Together:
How to Build Literacy Coalitions

In 1989, the State Library of Ohio completed Project Keystone which analyzed the development of literacy coalitions in Ohio. A survey and site visits to existing literacy coalitions revealed a mosaic of formats used by successful organizations to reach out to their communities. Some of the coalitions found that the appointment of a board of trustees, formal bylaws, and acquiring tax papers was an effective approach to meet their needs. Other coalitions demonstrated that informal gatherings have sufficed.

The purpose of a literacy coalition is to build upon the strengths of the individual members. Most literacy coalitions serve their members by sharing resources and acting as a clearinghouse for information on literacy issues and developments. Literacy coalitions operate much the same as other professional associations whose members share common interests.

Librarians will find that a literacy coalition in the county should help in the promotion of local activity. A three step process to start a coalition is listed below:

Step 1. Identify Interested Community People
Step 2. Convene Meetings to Form a Steering Committee
Step 3. Implement Recommendations

In any given community, there are individuals who are interested in working with social service organizations. These individuals may be found by coalitions in churches, literacy centers, local businesses, and other community organizations. From this group, a steering committee can be formed. In order to work more efficiently, the initial steering committee should be limited to no more than ten people.

After the members have been selected, the steering committee should meet to outline the broad goals and objectives for the coalition. The committee should meet at least monthly until the organization of the coalition is completed.

Once the coalition has been established, the steering committee can dissolve. It is the new coalition's job to implement the committee recommendations on articles of incorporation, tax status papers, bylaws, and selection of the members of the coalition.

Literacy coalitions will generally need to address four major areas of concern:

A. Publicity
B. Resource Sharing
C. Literacy Awareness Training
D. Funding

The successful coalition will meet these challenges and thereby gain the attention and esteem of the community. There are ten common elements which experience has demonstrated to be necessary to sustain a literacy coalition:

1. Board of Trustees
2. Public Library
3. Adult Basic Education
4. Local Businesses
5. Funding Sources
6. Literacy Programs
7. Tutors
8. Students
9. Office Staff
10. Laubach or LVA Liaison

It is not necessary to have every one of these elements in a community before a coalition is developed. However, most local coalitions will find that it is advisable to have a broadly based membership. By enabling organizations to work together, local coalitions have made significant contributions to the cause of literacy in communities of all sizes.

The Paper Chase:
Writing Successful Literacy Grants

Funding is one of the constant concerns of coalitions, literacy centers, and librarians who are interested in developing programs. Many librarians have found their funding source through a grant. Grants can be received from both public and private sources. Each funding agency will have its own specific guidelines and standards for application. However, certain common requirements are often found in most grant applications.

The basic format of a grant application has the following:

1. **Goal or Mission Statement**
2. **Project Abstract and Community Survey**
3. **List of Objectives**
4. **Plan of Action or List of Activities**
5. **Evaluation Component**

Goal or Mission Statement

A typical grant application will begin with a goal or mission statement. This goal statement usually is a broad representation of the intent of the grant. It is not too specific but rather gives the reader a general view of what the grant will accomplish for the community.

Project Abstract and Community Survey

A project abstract which summarizes the program of the grant often follows the goal statement. Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) grants require further exposition in the form of a problem and need study of the community.

List of Objectives

The second major component of a grant application will usually be a list of objectives. The objectives of the grant are more specific statements which can be measured as to the extent of their success with the completion of the project.

Plan of Action or List of Activities

The objectives of the grant are followed by a plan of action or list of activities. The list of activities will correspond on a one-to-one basis with each objective in the project. The activities will outline how the objectives will be achieved by the end of the grant. In many cases, a timetable will provide a convenient checklist for the completion of each activity.

Evaluation Component

The final section of the grant application will be the evaluation component. The evaluation will review each of the objectives to determine that the numerical measurements have been reached.

In most grant application formats there is also a budget section which is often separated from the main body of the text. Incorrect financial data can doom a grant application upon receipt by a potential funding source. Therefore, accuracy in these sections is imperative. Within Ohio, for example, the financial pages of any grant application by a public library is usually handled by the clerk treasurer of the library in cooperation with the director.

In Ohio, after a grant application is submitted, there will be a review process that will take place by the funding body. In the case of the Library Services and Construction Act grant, there is a review by the Advisory Committee for Special Library Services which is responsible for making recommendations to the State Library Board. The committee, whose membership includes educators and other non-librarians, evaluates the grant applications in terms of the need of community and how well the applicant has written the proposal in relation to that need. The committee notifies the State Library staff of its recommendations and finally the State Library Board makes the award of the grant.

In the last six years, the State Library Board has awarded literacy grants to libraries which have focused on a wide variety of concerns. For librarians contemplating the writing of a literacy grant, the following is a list of some of the successful project ideas that have been funded through the LSCA program:

1. Adult New Reader Book Discussion Clubs
2. Production of Videos on Aspects of Literacy
3. Literacy Awareness Workshops
4. Tutor Training Workshops
5. Collection Development of Adult New Reader Materials
6. Computer Literacy Software Training
7. Literacy Coalition Development
8. Publicity Campaigns for Community Literacy Activity
9. Staffing and Furnishing a Library Literacy Center
10. Coordination with Local Adult Basic Education

Seeing Through a Glass Darkly:
Looking Forward to the 1990's

It is evident that the coming decade will need and require a literate workforce. Every major economic predictor and analysis would seem to indicate an expansion in the use of automation and the further erosion of the traditional manufacturing and industrial economy. Librarians, in their keystone role, being the center of information in a community, will continue to serve a demanding population with myriad needs.

Some of the positive developments of the last few years in literacy will have a significant impact in the coming decade. These developments have included but are not limited to the following:

1. Workplace Literacy Programs
2. Family Literacy Programs
3. Increased Federal and State Funding of Literacy Programs.
4. Public Awareness of Literacy Issues
5. Television Coverage of Literacy Programs

The concept of workplace literacy is one that could produce major benefits in the coming decade. The basic theory is that each workplace site will take the responsibility to see that all workers meet a minimum standard of literacy. The funds would come from the training and conference funds that normally go exclusively to the highest levels of management. If just ten percent of those funds are applied in this way on a company by company basis, illiteracy will be greatly reduced. This policy will yield benefits not only for the companies themselves but for our whole society.

Family literacy programs have also begun to have an impact on community literacy concerns. The first lady, Barbara Bush, and many television performers can be seen to promote families reading together. Research has indicated that if a child has been read to on a regular basis prior to their entering school, their academic performance is enhanced. Additionally, parents that are readers and share their enthusiasm for the printed word with their children become good role models to be imitated.

In the last few years the federal government has made available to libraries through the LSCA program millions of dollars for literacy programs. This funding has come through both the Title 1 category for public library services and through Title V1 for literacy. The State of Ohio has recently implemented a two million dollar program for literacy through the State Department of Education. At this writing, there is before the Congress two literacy bills which if passed in their present form will provide additional funding and will mandate a major commitment from the federal government to fight illiteracy.

Another hopeful development which should only increase in the coming decade is awareness on the part of the public to the cause of literacy. More people are volunteering to be tutors, serving on literacy boards and commissions, helping out at literacy fund raisers, and gaining sensitivity to the adult new reader than ever before in our history.

The joint venture of the American Broadcasting Company and Public Television Stations in the PLUS (Project Literacy United States) campaign was the first time in the history of television that two networks have cooperated on a major joint venture. Its continuing success is a hopeful sign that more outreach will continue in the future. The tremendous power of television to reach a mass audience, coupled with its potential to sway public opinion, promises a more literate population. Television in the future may become the prime mover to bring people back to the printed word. This development would counter the conventional wisdom that television is a contributor to illiteracy. As more people are exposed to the issue of literacy on the medium of television, illiteracy will become a focus for the mass audience.

The United States will continue to see large numbers of immigrants from Southeast Asia and Latin America in this decade. Additionally, the recent developments in Eastern Europe may again increase the immigration from that continent. The public librarian will need to remain cognizant of the needs and aspirations of this growing segment of our population. The new immigrant will need materials in their native languages as well as access to the means to learn the English language.

It is a truism that America is a nation of immigrants. For most of the twentieth century, immigration came largely from Europe. In recent decades, and particularly since 1975, more immigrants have come from Southeast Asia and Latin America. As the LSCA Limited English Program has a literacy component, librarians have used such funding to address the needs of the new immigrant population.

Frequently, new immigrants use the library, as do other patrons, both for immediate access to information and as the point of entry into the cultural mainstream of the United States. Librarians can help new immigrants through various methods reflecting the individuality of every community. The following are some of the ways the public library serves new immigrants:

1. Providing foreign language books
2. Providing newspapers in foreign languages
3. Literacy tutoring
4. Cultural programs
5. Meeting space for special events

The library staff needs to be sensitive to the concerns of new immigrants. Cultural norms vary and cause barriers to effective communication. For example, the acceptable physical distance between two people holding a conversation will vary from culture to culture. For librarians, the constant factor remains the need to provide professional services while maintaining an attitude which allows the immigrant to feel welcome.

In working with new immigrants, the cooperation of the community leaders of the same ethnic background is an important element to receive. These leaders can play a pivotal role in encouraging the targeted population to avail themselves of the resources of the library.

As the new decade evolves, it is likely that immigration will continue to challenge the resources of our communities to provide job opportunities, education, housing, and cultural programming. The public library will continue to be of major importance to the lives of new immigrants.

Any social forecast which involves the necessity of securing funding, has to take into account a number of variables that are difficult to incorporate into a service plan. For librarians, these uncertainties are related to the state of the federal and local economies. Another unknown factor, that will impact librarians seeking to develop literacy programs, is the willingness of lawmakers to allocate funds to literacy efforts.

The following predictions are no doubt subject to error and given only as tentative guidelines:

1. Literacy as a public policy issue will continue to receive national attention through the government and major media outlets.

2. Federal funding of literacy programs should increase for the period of 1991-1995 and level off at the middle of the decade.

3. Public libraries, literacy centers, and educational entities will face increased accountability on the expenditures of public funds for literacy.

4. Funding for drug education programs will be linked to literacy programs as a two tiered approach to combat crime.

5. Television will encourage the visibility of literacy activity in the community and promote increased civic responsiveness to literacy concerns.

6. Immigrants will be seen as a national asset filling the void in younger workers and helping to provide services for older Americans.

7. English will continue to coalesce as the world language prompting the need for Americans to teach new readers in foreign lands.

8. Technological advances will require frequent retraining of office workers with adult basic education centers devoting considerable attention to computer literacy skills.

9. Literacy centers will incorporate computer technology to bring tutors and students together over wider distances.

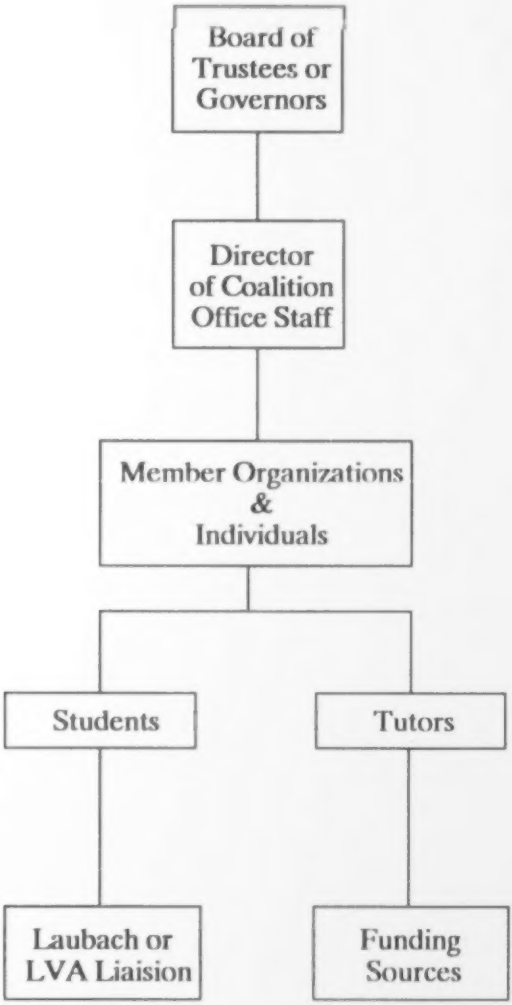
10. Functional literacy requirements should raise the general quality of educational achievement in the United States to record levels.

Conclusion
Literacy: The Word Goes Forth...

The modern literacy movement may be said to have begun with the missionary work of Dr. Frank Laubach among the natives of the Philippines in the 1930's. Dr. Laubach realized that literacy skills were best taught on an "each one teach one" basis and found it helpful to live and work among the native people.

Dr. Laubach's success is a tribute to him but also a reminder to us to work to lift the human spirit. To be involved in helping someone learn to read, in whatever capacity that involvement takes us, is to grasp that chain which links us together as fellow sojourners on the Earth.

Literacy Coalition Sample Organization Chart



LSCA TITLE I/III

Application Checklist

____ Is the application written in such a way that a non-librarian could understand it?

____ Does the RESULTS OR BENEFITS EXPECTED section describe how the users will benefit from the project?

____ Does the PROBLEM statement describe the situation that exists in your service area that makes this project necessary?

____ Is the NEED statement written from the point of view of the user?

____ Are the OBJECTIVES realistic and measurable? Do they address user needs?

____ Is there in the PLAN OF ACTION section at least one ACTIVITY for each OBJECTIVE?

____ Do the ACTIVITIES in the TIMETABLE correspond exactly to the ACTIVITIES listed in the PLAN OF ACTION?

____ Is there an EVALUATION statement for each OBJECTIVE?

____ Have you checked your math in the BUDGET pages? Do the rows and columns total correctly?

____ Is every item listed in the BUDGET pages explained in the PLAN OF ACTION/ACTIVITIES section?

____ Do the figures on the COST ANALYSIS pages (A through H) add up to the figures on the COST SUMMARY AND BUDGET page (J)?

____ Have you numbered the pages of the application?

Notes

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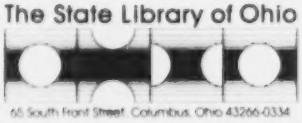

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